Annual Report Oct. 2004

Benzie Conservation District

59 Years of Service

Perfect Way to Celebrate Earth Day

Project Highlights

2003 Minutes

Treasury Report

The Benzie Conservation District received a DTE grant to plant 6,500 trees on the Maley Forest property. Youngster Cameron shown in the photo helps to plant a white pine tree on Earth Day 2004. "Planting white pine and red oak will add diversity, ensure future timber and provide additional wildlife habitat as well as kicking off plans for a Nature Study Area.Our desire to contribute to this community fuels the development of the Maley Forest Nature Study Area. We'll offer tree planting work projects, proper care and maintenance of tree seedlings, and invite people to enjoy the land," says Diane Hash, BCD Forester.

The Maley family donated land to the BCD entrusting the District to practice sustainable forestry. The Maley Forest covers 160 acres of gently rolling hills, mostly covered with red pines, aspen and young hardwoods. Mary Pitcher, Executive Director says "We'd like to see schools utilize the property as an outdoor classroom and we encourage nature enthusiasts to ski, hike and bike the property."

Joe Stepanovich of Last Step Building Services donated the use of his tractor to create furrows for the 6,500 seedlings. Furrows clear other plant competition from a swath of land, expose mineral soil for easy planting and trough the earth to catch water. This Earth Day project could not have happened without help from community members like Joe, our Board members, Barry Hahn's Benzie Central class, the Sierra Club, the contingent of home school families, the Larson's at Benzie Automotive and friends from the community. Our community's stewardship of the Maley Forest has made is a great place to visit. Feel free to explore it and be surprised by the seedlings growth during the wet spring.

" To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope for survival."

- Wendell Berry

No Borers found in Benzie County

Phase II of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) detection project is complete. Local Forester, Diane Hash, finished the second part of a three-part project by monitoring 40 trees strategically located throughout Benzie County. "I checked each tree to see if adult borers were caught in tanglefoot, a very sticky substance applied to the trees during Phase I. I'm happy to say no borers were found in Benzie County," states Hash.

Phase III, expected to begin in mid-November, involves Michigan Department of Agriculture crews and the Benzie Conservation District Forester. Crews will chainsaw the 40 trap trees, strip the bark to search for potential EAB larvae, then chip and remove the downed tree.

Crews working in south-eastern Michigan have taken down 1,350 trees. "During the peeling process they found larvae in trees that neither showed outward symptoms nor collected an adult borer in tanglefoot," Micheal Phillip, Michigan Department of Agriculture. "We are not in the clear yet. We'll see what crews discover by peeling the bark of trees in Benzie County," Hash states. "If Emerald Ash Borer is discovered homeowners need to be prepared."

"We are not in the clear yet."

Currently, an eradication plan established by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA Forest Service and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in cooperation with state Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources is underway in the quarantined area of Southwest Michigan. Eradication (not be confused with detection) involves removal of all visibly infested ash trees, as well as all other ash trees within a ½-mile radius of the visibly infested trees. Since infested trees do not show external signs or symptoms of attack during the first year, there is no way to determine which trees in the vicinity of infested trees were themselves infested. Consequently, it is necessary to cut even apparently healthy trees to destroy the insects lurking within before they can emerge, disperse and reproduce. Felled trees are chipped and incinerated at a co-generation power plant, and stumps are treated with herbicide to prevent sprouting.

Landowners are, of course, passionate about thier trees and have varying opinions of how to protect them. Some people have called for more aggressive action, i.e., more than a 1/2 mile radius should be cleared to stop the spread of the borer. Other people claim cutting trees is not necessary at all. Ideally, there's a happy medium.

In 2002, a downstate private forestry company began trunk injections and root soil applications as a preventative measure against EAB attacks. The company has been successfully treating 1,600 ash trees on public and private property in the Grosse Pointe Farms area. A company representative said 98 percent of the trees treated from 2002 remain healthy. Deb McCullough, MSU entomologist, said they are on the right track, "Overall I'm really positive if you start with a relatively healthy tree, and ash is one of the most resistant of trees, you can get good results" with preventative chemical treatment.

Research has shown that preventative insecticide applications can effectively protect shade trees from emerald ash borer. "Decide if you are willing to invest in your landscape ash trees. Local tree service professionals are prepared to chemically treat ash trees for homeowners, but the services cost money," says Diane Hash, Benzie Conservation District

MISSION STATEMENT

The Benzie Conservation District will provide responsible use of natural resources in our community by providing leadership, information and services.

Soil survey maps now available at District office

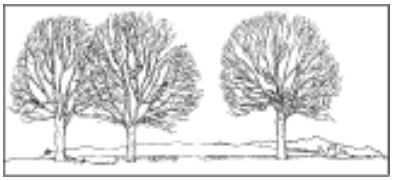
Benzie County soil survey field work is completed and draft soil maps are available at the Conservation District office. The maps consist of aerial photos with soil delineation lines outlining different soil types of all Benzie County l. The maps display codes for each soil type and soil descriptions are provided.

Copies of maps and descriptions are available at the District office for $0.25/page.

Forester. No insecticide program has been effective enough for complete eradication. Commercial loggers can process ash trees in forest stands. There is no need to treat or remove ash trees until EAB is confirmed in Benzie County. At that time, there is still a window of time to set up treatments and/or realize potential income from timber ash trees.

We shall see what the Michigan Department of Agriculture has in store for Northern Michigan when and if the Emerald Ash Borer is confirmed. Finally Hash assumes, "If the eradication plan is enforced here, the only ash trees that have a chance will be located in homeowner's yards who are taking preventative measures."

Written by:Diane Hash, District Forester



Forestry Program Highlights January – September 2004

The Benzie Conservation District provides forestry assistance once again. After nearly two years with little or no forestry expertise, the District board members, staff and community welcomes this returned service. Landowners now pay a small fee for onsite forestry services, helping to stabilize the position.

Forestry highlights:

- DTE Energy Grant pays for 6,500 tree seedlings
- Earth Day tree planting project involves 60 volunteers on the Maley Forest
- Maley Forest timber sale provides critical funding for Benzie Conservation District
- Forestry leadership for 12 Leave No Trace trips
- Addition to Benzie County Greenbelt Ordinance
- Leadership in annual tree sale
- Wrote Forest Stewardship Grant for Maley Forest demonstration project to build premiere trail system demonstrating sustainable forest management practices

Forestry Assistance Program Services Offered

In-office consultations	Free
Onsite consultations	$25.00
Individualized Forest Landowner Guide	$50.00
Management Plans	$100-$400 (depending on type of plan)
Timber Stand Improvement tree marking	$25/hour

In Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

The District Staff wish to recognize the leadership of our three retired Board of Directors. Please join us in thanking Keith Westphal, Jon Royer, and Will Wolfe at our Annual Meeting.

Jon Royer retired from the board in October of 2003. Jon continues to share his expertise with the District by serving on the District Advisory Board and volunteering on special projects. This year Jon planted hundreds of trees at the Maley Reforestation Project. Thanks Jon for all of your continued environmental protection efforts.

Dr. Willard Wolfe joined the Board in 1998 and served as Chair of the Conservation District from 2000 to October of 2003. Will resigned as a District Director in August 2004. During his tenure, he made many contributions including overseeing a successful fund raising campaign, providing leadership in the purchase of a District office building, and expansion of programs available to the community.

Board Recongnized continued...

Keith Westphal has served on the Conservation District board since 2000. Keith's term expires this year and he is not seeking re-election. During his service, he provided leadership in the Platte River Watershed Council and helped with our heavy machinery for the Maley Reforestation planting. Keith plans to pursue travel plans with his wife Judy. He will continue to volunteer for the District when he is in Benzie County.

Their leadership and ability to create community support allow the Benzie Conservation District to fulfill our mission and we appreciate all the effort and energy our Directors give to the District. We invite the community to help us honor our retired Board of Directors at our Annual Meeting November 1, 7:00 at the Sail Inn Restaurant.

Five years of Watershed Projects

Watershed Project Update

The Benzie Conservation District is now in its 5th year of coordinating and conducting water resource protection projects. Our efforts have been focused at the watershed level and include the Platte River and Herring Lakes drainage basins. Both projects follow the watershed planning and implementation approach developed by US EPA and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Watershed Management has since become a standard approach for comprehensive water resource management and protection.

The Platte River Project successfully completed the management plan phase in 2002 and has since been implementing various aspects of the approved plan. The initial priorities for implementation were to reduce erosion and sedimentation associated with road-stream crossings. Unfortunately, funding for this activity was eliminated shortly after the plan was approved. Fortunately, though, the Benzie Road Commission has taken many steps to improve some of the highest priority sites.

In the absence of funding for structural improvements, the project focused on the non-structural components of the management plan which include education and awareness and water quality monitoring. In the past year project staff has reached 400 students and adults through the "Leave No Trace" program conducted in partnership with many local schools and organizations. Watershed road signs and daily radio ads continue to provide additional watershed awareness. A state of the art monitoring effort conducted in partnership with MDNR and the Platte Lake Improvement Association resulted in vast improvements in the knowledge base of current point source and nonpoint source pollution in the watershed. An important component of this activity was the development and calibration of the EPA Basins model which serves to both visualize the water quality data and provide the means for predicting future water quality impacts form land use changes. While this effort is still in its infancy, it received international acknowledgement at the 2004 Watershed and Environment Conference in Dearborn Michigan. Funding for the Platte River Watershed Project ends in July 2005. The District is actively seeking funds to continue the refinement and implementation of the Management Plan to promote further awareness of watershed issues and preservation of water resources.

Native perennial wildflowers

The District continues to expand our offering of native perennial wildflowers and grasses. Watch for seedling catalog in February. Perennial orders are accepted throughout the spring and plants arrive in mid May.

A two year management plan project was completed for the Upper and Lower Herring Lakes drainage basin in July 2004. The management plan was conditionally approved and the project is currently in a one-year transitional process to include newly required EPA criteria for management plans.

Surface and water quality monitoring was an important task in the planning phase of this project. Earlier studies suggested high pollution loading occurring in the watershed. Our monitoring effort has so far verified that measurable degradation is indeed occurring in the watershed. This is especially concerning given the relatively small size of the two lakes. Continued monitoring, as well as education and awareness will continue as we complete the transition phase of the project. We are hopeful that funding will continue through the management plan implementation phase and that community interest and support of water resource management goals will continue so that irreversible resource degradation can be avoided.

Written by: Ron Harrison
Watershed Project Coordinator

Marking the Watershed Territory

Educating our neighbors about watersheds is a BCD priority. We have installed 10 watershed signs in the Platte River Watershed and 6 signs in the Herring Lakes Watershed along highly traveled roadways and developing areas. Watershed boundary signs at the edge of the watershed basin and river crossing signs directly next to the waterway draining to the Platte River or the Herring Lakes is the best way to help the public link their land use to their watershed's health.

The Benzie Road Commission graciously waived permit fees for the project as well as some labor fees when they installed the 16 signs this October. Mike Wells, Road Commission me out in one the big orange sign trucks to install the first sign on Indian Hill Rd. Without the easy cooperation of the Road Commission's Board, Director and Nancy Roseman this project would never have been realized.

Since the installation of the signs, the District office has received emails from citizens with pictures they took of the signs and notes of thanks. We also have heard from citizens asking about the definition of a watershed and what restrictions apply to watersheds. All local, state, and federal environmental protection laws do apply to land within a watershed.

Remember we all live in a watershed and everything we do to the land within the watershed funnels down to affect our rivers and lakes.

Written by: Jenee Rowe
Watershed Outreach and Education Coordinator

Benzie Kids Canoe to Learn about Watersheds

Benzie County kids are learning about the Platte River Watershed by canoeing, watching the Salmon spawn, learning about how to preserve the land upstream from soil erosion, and then taking their lessons back to the classroom to raise salmon eggs with the "Salmon in the Classroom" program. Students have many chances to take this program at different grade levels and will therefore learn the varying complexities of science behind creating and preserving a healthy habitat by protecting the whole watershed. ***A "WATERSHED" is the total land area draining to a common body of water such as a river, lake, or wetland. Surface runoff is confined within the surrounding hills and slopes which defines the boundaries of the watershed.***

"It's pretty cool to slow down and watch."

The Benzie Conservation District, Riverside Canoes, National Park Service and the Benzie Fishery Coalition have partnered to lead the *Leave No Trace in your Waterway* canoe program, which enables Benzie county students to spend a day canoeing the Lower Platte River before they receive their Salmon eggs to raise in the classroom. They experienced first hand how the river is affected by the activities throughout the watershed, especially soil erosion. A high school student wrote in a letter to the Benzie Conservation District saying, "Usually I just paddle and don't really pay attention to the different parts of the river, the deep fishing holes and such, its pretty cool to slow down and watch." Alaina Schurr of Sarah Colligan's 6th Grade class said of her trip this past spring, " My favorite part was when we were trying to get the sea lamprey and also along the lake, I learned that white pine grows along the river banks".

Through "*Leave No Trace in your Waterway*" we emphasize low-impact recreation and the importance of native shoreline vegetation for healthy salmon. We teach ways to recreate without leaving a trace on the watershed, and we practiced methods to restore native shorelines along the riverside and lakeshore. We know that hands-on, unique experiences such as canoeing leave lasting impressions. We've found that the Platte River has a soil erosion and a polluted runoff problem and we need young community members to understand these complex problems and proactively develop solutions to keep the watershed clean.

This year we had 342 students and 102 parents, teachers, or school staff involved from 7 schools in the area participate in their watershed in the Leave No Trace in your Waterway Program. Students came from Benzie Central High, Platte River Elementary , Frankfort High , Lake Ann Elementary, Crystal Lake Elementary, Betsie Valley Elementary and Buckley High School.

Written by: Jenee Rowe
Watershed Outreach and Education Coordinator

These two 6th graders easily spotted the restoration sites along the Platte River where the National Park Service, Benzie Conservation District and students on the Leave No Trace in Your Waterway trips were planting trees, carrying leaves for cover and dragging logs to stop soil erosion.

Saving Shorelines Naturally

-Notes from the Field

Monday, June 14th Driving along Torch Lake behind Jeff Kenzie's truck, a Shoreline Erosion Specialist for the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Organization to one of their hundreds of greenbelt sites in the region. I see willow and red osier dogwood bare root trees bouncing around in buckets and plug flats full of native perennials and grasses pilled among the shovels and hoses. Jeff pulls out the sites plans that were submitted to DEQ and Soil Erosion Control Officer for the first phase of placing coconut husk roles and small rock along the eroding lakeshore. Seeing the progress of his work crew over the last few weeks to reshape and replant the slope is inspiring.

As we dig up the turf grass and plant new jersey tea, wild strawberry and indian grass, Jeff explains how in keeping with the property owner's desires, the mature height of the plant materials is varied, including several large trees with extensive roots systems, a variety of shrubs, and a mix of grasses and perennials. The overall aesthetic is orderly but not "manicured". Plant materials will be distributed throughout the 25 foot greenbelt buffer strip. The existing grass will not be removed, but will stay in place to prevent further erosion, while the tress, shrubs, and perennials become established. The vegetation and landscaping that exists on the slope can continue to serve as a functional part of the shoreline erosion control system.

Wednesday, July 1st Walking along Platte Lake with local native plant Landscape Designer, Carolyn Thayer, we discuss that we need the skills and background of a landscape architect rather than just a reclamation expert for this demonstration project because though we are interested in reclamation of native shorelines, we are aiming to create a beautiful demonstration project to draw knowledge from, monitor, and use for homeowner education. At the Birch Point Demonstration site, there is low grade shoreline erosion and we an opportunity to create beautiful native planting all along the shoreline as a biotechnical erosion control experiment in Benzie County.

Friday, July 16th Sitting in the homeowner's living room at the **Birch Point Demonstration Site**, sipping a pop as they explain their motives for participating in the project. They say, "the greenbelt design will be a success if it can control erosion on their property, absorb nutrients before they reach the surface water, recreate shoreline habitat because they love the blue herrings and ducks, and add visual continuity and more aesthetic character to their shoreline.

Thursday, September 23rd Thirty-five Benzie Central High School students pile off the bus under the leadership of Jerry Block at the Birch Point Demonstration Site to do the final burst of planting on the greenbelt design. I reflected upon the hours of digging and planting over the last month and wondered why it took me so long to realize the power of teaching our youth practical restoration skills and to appreciate the force of young laborers!!! Over the two hours of our work party, we planted 48 wild strawberry plants, 8 large red osier dogwood trees, 30 other perennials and grasses and spread 4 yards of shredded hardwood mulch to help plants retain water during dry periods and also give them an advantage over the grass.

Waving goodbye to the students at the end of the day, they seemed like they needed even more of a challenge than this simple planting. I can't wait to work along side them at the next greenbelt planting.

Saving Shorelines continued...

After months of preparation, planning, site design, plant caretaking and down in the dirt digging, I reflect on a phrase Suz McLaughlin, a green thumb of native plants told me, "the first year native plants sleep, the next they creep, and by the third year they leap."

All we can do now is to trust the native plants, the mighty forces of the lake and the durability of the shoreline to work out a balance. We'll see how it does come spring.

Written by: Jenee Rowe
Watershed Outreach and Education Coordinator

Minutes
Benzie Conservation District Annual Meeting
Wednesday November 5, 2003

Meeting called to order by Chairman, Will Wolfe at 7:05 pm. Approximately 40 residents and visitors were in attendence. Meeting opened with welcoming comments by Wolfe.

Sec/Treasurer Ray Kadlec read the minutes of the 2002 Annual Meeting. Motion by Jean Kadlec to approve minutes as presented. Supported by Judith Webber. Motion carried. Motion by Virginia Sorenson to accept treasurer's report as presented. Second by Jean Kadlec. Motion carried.

Chairman Wolfe introduced staff and Board members.

Executive Director, Mary Pitcher explained process for Board elections. Ballots and voter eligibility verification forms were distributed.

Keynote speaker, Heather Shumaker, of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy gave an overview of the proposed acquisition of approximately 6000 acres in southern Benzie and northern Manistee Counties.

Election results were announced. Martin Smeltzer and Raymond Kadlec each elected to a four year term on the District Board of Directors.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Pitcher

The Benzie Conservation District is a local unit of state government. It is organized under the Soil Conservation District Law which is PA 463 of 1998. The locally elected five member board of directors makes the decisions regarding District programs and activities. These programs provide technical help, information, and awareness, to assist landowners and residents in proper management of their natural resources.

Benzie Conservation District Board of Directors and Staff

Ann Bourne, Chairman
Ray Kadlec, Secretary/Treasurer
Keith Westphal, Director
Martin Smeltzer, Director
Judith Webber, Director

Mary Pitcher, Executive Director
Ron Harrison, Watershed Project Coordinator
Diane Hash, Forester
Jenée Rowe, Watershed Outreach/Education Coordinator
Dan Busby, Groundwater Stewarship Program

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